

Message Text

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INFO USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD UNN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS UNN

USMISSION GENEVA UNN

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM UNN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA UNN

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT UNN

AMEMBASSY LONDON UNN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW UNN

AMEMBASSY PARIS UNN

AMEMBASSY RABAT UNN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI UNN

AMEMBASSY TUNIS UNN

USMISSION USUN NY UNN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 13325

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

LONDON FOR LAMBRAKIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINS PLO XF

SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN GOVT-IN-EXILE

REF: BEIRUT 13019 (NOTAL)

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SUMMARY: SURFACING OF FURTHER INTERNAL PLO CONTROVERSY RE FOR-

MATION OF PALESTINIAN GOVT-IN-EXILE HAS RENDERED IT MOST UNLIKELY THAT SUCH GOVT WILL BE PROCLAIMED BEFORE OR DURING UNGA DEBATE ON PALESTINE QUESTION. AT SAME TIME, PROSPECT THAT PROVISIONAL GOVT WILL STILL PROBABLY BE ANNOUNCED AT SOME FUTURE DATE IS ALREADY CAUSING CONCERN AMONG LEBANESE OFFICIAL AND PUBLIC OPINION, IN VIEW OF COMPLICATIONS THIS COULD SPELL FOR FUTURE GOL-FEDAYEEN RELATIONS AND FOR GOL'S CONTINUING DESIRE REMAIN ALOOF FROM ARAB-ISRAEL CONFLICT. END SUMMARY.

1. WHAT INITIALLY APPEARED TO US IN AFTERMATH OF RABAT SUMMIT MEETING AS REJUVENATED MOMENTUM TOWARD FORMATION OF PALESTINIAN GOVT-IN-EXILE (REFTEL) SEEMS TO HAVE SLACKENED IN PAST WEEK. WE NOW UNDERSTAND THAT ONGOING PLO EX COMM AND CENTRAL COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS HAVE REVEALED CONTINUING LACK OF UNANIMITY ON THIS SUBJECT, AND HAT PROCLAMATION OF PROVISIONAL GOVT WILL NOT RPT NOT TAKE PLACE UNTIL SOME TIME AFTER UPCOMING DEBATE IN UNGA. THIS ASSESSMENT CONFIRMED HERE NOV 6 IN STATEMENTS BY PLO OFFICIALS CHAFIC AL HOUT AND KHALID AL FAHOUM (BOTH KNOWN TO BE PROPONENTS OF GOVT-IN-EXILE CONCEPT).

2. BIGGEST SINGLE SETBACK TO GOVT-IN-EXILE CONCEPT, WHICH ALONG WITH OTHER POLICIES OF PLO "MODERATES" HAS CONTINUED DRAW VOCAL OPPOSITION FROM FEDAYEEN "REJECTIONIST" GROUPS, CAME ON NOV 5, WHEN SA'IQA NO. 2 MAN SAMI ATTARI ANNOUNCED THAT HIS ORGANIZATION (AND PRESUMABLY SYRIAN GOVT AS WELL) FINDS IT UNAPPEALING. PROVISIONAL PALESTINIAN GOVT, SAID ATTARI, IS UNNECESSARY NOW THAT PLO HAS GAINED GREATER ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION. TAKING CUE FROM "REJECTIONISTS", HE WARNED THAT ESTABLISHMENT OF SUCH GOVT WOULD SUGGEST PALESTINIANS ARE WILLING SETTLE FOR ONLY PART OF PALESTINE AND THEREBY WEAKEN PLO'S ATTACHMENT TO LONG-TERM "STRATEGIC" GOAL OF ESTABLISHING SECULAR, DEMOCRATIC STATE IN ALL OF PALESTINE. ATTARI ALSO POINTED OUT THAT PLO LEADERSHIP IS ALSO UNDER OBLIGATION TO OBTAIN ENDORSEMENT OF GOVT-IN-EXILE FROM PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL, A REQUIREMENT THAT WOULD COMPLICATE AND PROLONG PROCESS OF FORMING SUCH GOVT.

3. ANOTHER, MORE LONG-STANDING OBSTACLE APPEARS TO BE
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CONTINUING INABILITY OF VARIOUS FACTIONS REPRESENTED WITHIN PLO TO AGREE ON ALLOTMENT OF SLOTS IN PROVISIONAL GOVT. WE UNDERSTAND, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT FATAH RIGHT-WINGERS--E.G., KHALID AL HASSAN AND OTHERS BACKED BY KING FEISAL AND SADAT--HAVE BEEN ADVOCATING 20-MAN GOVT COMPOSED LARGELY OF "MODERATES" AND EXCLUDING "LEFTIST" MEMBERS OF PLO AND PALESTINE NATIONAL FRONT (PNF). OTHER PLO FACTIONS, INCLUDING LESS "MODERATE" OR "LEFTIST" FATAH ELEMENTS, APPARENTLY SEEKING 20 TO 30-MEMBER GOVT THAT WOULD ENCOMPASS ALL EXISTING TENDENCIES WITHIN PLO EX COMM. ADDITIONAL CONTROVERSY REPORTEDLY EXISTS BETWEEN SUPPORTERS OF 'ARAFAT

AS HEAD OF PROVISIONAL GOVT AND THOSE WHO PREFER SEE SOME NON-FEDAYEEN FIGURE GIVEN THIS POST (E.G., PNF LUMINARIES 'ABD AL MUHSEN ABU MAYZAR OR WALID QAMHAWI, OR EVEN WEST BANK NOTABLE SULEIMAN NABULSI). THERE ARE ALSO SOME TENTATIVE INDICATIONS, NOW THAT PLO RIFT WITH JORDAN HAS BEEN "SETTLED", THAT SENTIMENT MAY EXIST FOR INCLUDING ONE OR TWO EAST BANK PALESTINIAN FIGURES HERETOFORE LOYAL TO KING HUSSEIN.

4. GIVEN SUCH PULLING AND TUGGING, PLO LEADERSHIP IS APPARENTLY CASTING ABOUT FOR ADDITIONAL EXTERNAL SUPPORT TO BOLSTER ITS POSITION IN FAVOR OF ANNOUNCING PALESTINIAN PROVISIONAL GOVT AT EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF DEBATE IN NEW YORK. (HAWATMEH'S SUDDEN DEPARTURE FOR MOSCOW NOV 4 WAS ALMOST CERTAINLY PROMPTED BY DESIRE TO OBTAIN RENEWED BLESSING FOR PROVISIONAL GOVT CONCEPT FROM SOVS.) IN MENA-TIME, 'ARAT, PLO INFORMATION CHIEF ABD RABBO AND OTHER PLO SPOKESMEN ARE TAKING MORE CAUTIOUS LINE IN RESPONDING TO QUERIES RE GOVT-IN-EXILE, STATING SIMPLY THAT IT WILL BE FORMED WHEN "CONDITIONS ARE SUITABLE", ETC. WE ALSO NOTE (FBIS LO21058) THAT PLO EX COMM HAS DIRECTED PREPARATION OF "POLITICAL AND LEGAL STUDIES" RE PROVISIONAL GOVT MODELED AFTER ALGERIAN AND VIET CONG EXAMPLES.

5. SHOULD BE NOTED THAT ALL THE RECENT TALK RE ESTABLISHMENT OF PALESTINIAN PROVISIONAL GOVT IS OCCASIONING CONSIDERABLE UNEASE IN OFFICIAL LEBANESE CIRCLES AND AMONG LOCAL CHRISTIAN AND RIGHT-WING OPINION. CONTRARY TO FOND HOPE VOICED PARA 7 STATE 242587 (NOTAL) WE THINK THERE IS LITTLE POSSIBILITY THAT GOL COULD SUCCESSFULLY RESIST LOCATION OF SEAT OF GOVT-IN-EXILE IN BEIRUT. (PAST EXPERIENCE INDICATES THAT LEBANESE COULD NOT RPT NOT COUNT
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ON MUCH SYMPATHY OR SUPPORT FROM OTHER ARAB GOVTS IF --AS IS LIKELY--'ARAFAT AND CCO. SHOULD PROVE UNWILLING TO SUBJECT NEW GOVT TO SYRIAN OR EGYPTIAN "TUTELAGE" BY LOCATING IT IN DAMASCUS OR CAIRO). MOREOVER, EVEN IF PROVISIONAL GOVT IS LOCATED ELSEWHERE, FACT OF ITS ESTABLISHMENT WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY PLACE ADDITIONAL CONSTRAINTS ON GOL'S ALREADY DIFFICULT TASK OF EXERTING GREATER CONTROL OVER FEDAYEED ACTIVITIES AND THEIR "STATE WITHIN A STATE" STATUS IN LEBANON. SUCH SITUATION COULD LEAD INEXORABLY TO WORSENERED RELATIONS BETWEEN LEBANON AND ISRAEL.
GODLEY

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